

# Relating to Others in the Family

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] If you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to 1 Timothy. We're continuing our way through the book. And with the exception of the last verse of chapter 3, we have now finished the first four chapters of the book, so we've only got two left.

And today we're going to pick up Paul's letter here in chapter 5. 1 Timothy chapter 5. Let me read our passage for us this morning.

Beginning in verse 1. Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters with absolute purity.

Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents.

For this is pleasing to God. The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.

[ 1 : 2 9 ] But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. Give the people these instructions so that no one may be open to blame. Anyone who does not provide for their relatives and especially for their own household has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over 60, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord's people, helping those in trouble, and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.

As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list, for when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. Thus they bring judgment on themselves because they have broken their first pledge.

Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house, and not only do they become idlers, but also busybodies, who talk nonsense, saying things they ought not to.

So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes, and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.

[ 2 : 5 8 ] If any woman who is a believer has widows in her care, she should continue to help them and not let the church be burdened with them so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

This passage has two distinct parts. In the first part, Paul gives instructions to Timothy about how to relate to other people in the church. That's in verses 1 and 2.

The second part contains instructions for how to care for widows in the church, which is verse 3 all the way down to 16. And with only a quick read-through of this passage, we may think that these words are not really that relevant to us.

Unless, of course, we have a large church with a whole bunch of widows. But if we take time to really reflect over the meaning of these words, there's actually a lot here that applies to us.

Let's start at the top with the first couple verses. Paul says to Timothy, Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters with absolute purity.

[ 4 : 18 ] We all have all kinds of differences here in the church, but we have been brought together by our common faith in Jesus. But now, how are we to get along with one another?

Jesus says, Treat one another as family. Now, family relationships in a fallen world are not always easy.

Sometimes they fail to be what they should be. But we all know the ideal. We all have a yearning for good family relationships.

We all know that friends come and go, but family will always be family. The son of your mother will always be your brother.

And there's to be a special loyalty and commitment that goes with family. Treat one another here in the church as family.

[ 5 : 20 ] Like that, says Jesus. This is one of the main themes of this whole letter to Timothy. If we look back to chapter 3, Paul said, I'm writing you these instructions so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God.

So what is the church? It is a household. A family. And so we are to treat one another as family, says Christ.

We are to be like brothers and sisters to one another, mothers and fathers and sons and daughters to each other. There are at least two aspects of family that should be reflected in our relationships with each other here in the church.

One is purity and the other is care for each other's needs. Look at what Paul says here in verse 2.

He says, Treat younger women as sisters with absolute purity. Sometimes we may wonder how to interact.

[ 6 : 32 ] How do we conduct ourselves with the members of the opposite sex here in the church? Well, Christ makes it really simple for us. He says, Just treat them like you would a family member of the opposite sex with absolute purity.

which for us men means be a good brother to the women. A good brother watches out for his sisters.

A good brother uses his strength to protect his sisters. A good brother never even thinks about doing anything inappropriate with his sisters. She's your sister. A good brother longs for his sister to be loved and cherished by an honorable man.

A good brother helps his sister out when she's in need of assistance. A good brother talks to his sisters and asks them how they're doing.

Cares about the things going on in their lives when they're together. And I could go on, but you get the idea. And this principle of family applies in all the other ways as well.

[ 7 : 39 ] Women be good sisters to the men in the church. What does that mean? I'm not going to flesh all of these out, but I would encourage us all to reflect on these things this week.

What does it mean to be a good brother to the women in the church? What does it mean to be a good sister to the men in the church? For those of us who are younger, what does it mean to treat older men in the church as you would your father?

How should you treat your father? Paul tells us in this passage just one way, one example. He says, don't rebuke them harshly, but exhort them or bring up an issue with them respectfully, gently.

That's just one example. How else should you treat your father? It reflects on how we should interact with the older men in the church. How should you treat your mother?

Same thing towards the women. How does a good father or mother treat their children? How should we relate to all the children here in the church?

[ 8 : 56 ] Family is the pattern that God has given us. More than that, family is the spiritual reality that Jesus has brought about for us. It's not just a pattern to follow, it's who we are in Christ.

We are brothers and sisters through our union with him. The church is not a club or an organization like we see in the world.

It's a family. And family relationships are marked by purity. That's the first thing we aspect, we see a family. And the second one, family relationships are marked by care for one another.

And not just the neighborly care, but another level of care for one another. And we're going to see that fleshed out fully in the next verses as it pertains to widows.

But let's just think about this in general. Family has each other's backs. Family sacrifices in love for each other.

[ 9 : 59 ] Family stays by your side when you're in the hospital. family will not let you go hungry when times are hard. Family makes time for each other.

Family cares deeply about the dignity and honor of each other. And that's how we're to be as a church in our relationships with each other. Family.

Because we are the household of God. So I want to encourage us all to just reflect on this this week to ask ourselves this question. How have I been relating to the various other people in the church?

Some of you are wonderful examples of this and I noticed it right away when I first moved here six years ago that this church had more of a feeling of family than any other church I had been in before.

But let's not think that we've fully arrived yet. We can grow closer. We can grow stronger. We can grow healthier as a family. As a household. And so I want to invite each of you to take time this week to reflect on your own relationships with the people in the church.

[ 11 : 10 ] How have I been treating others in the church? May the Lord speak to us about that this week. Now on the topic of family what comes next in verses 3 to 16 makes a lot of sense.

Paul's not just trying to help Timothy solve some challenging issue that's only relevant to Ephesus with these widows. It's more than that. He's showing how this kind of familial care should happen for the neediest members of the church.

For the widows. what's it like to be a widow? A widow is a woman who was married but whose husband has died and is now unmarried.

And back in these days they didn't have Canada Pension Plan or old age security so an older widow might find herself in a real bind after her husband passed away.

And so Paul urges Timothy to apply this principle of family care and love to those who are truly in need in the larger church family.

[ 12 : 26 ] He says give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. Don't overlook them. Don't let them lack the basic needs or the provisions.

Treat them honorably as if they were part of your family and see to it that their needs are met. And as Paul goes on we notice that there are some other important instructions that he has when it comes to this.

The church is to help provide for widows who are in need but the church is not to become a sort of assisted living household where sons and daughters just drop off their parents in their elderly years for free care and then the children can go off and live their lives.

In verse 4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents for this is pleasing to God.

This is a really strong statement. Your mother father or your grandmother or your aging parents or grandparents they are your own family says Paul and you owe it to them to care for them and to provide for them if they should fall into a position of real need.

[ 13 : 58 ] So yes the church should provide for widows who are in need but that familial responsibility falls first to their own sons and daughters and not just sons and daughters but even grandchildren and the language here is so strong Paul uses that language of repayment of returning compensation which means that all of us owe our parents a great debt.

They brought us into the world they carried us with them they provided for our needs when we were utterly dependent and helpless it was a huge life sacrifice of love that was given to all of us by our parents.

Now I know that there's exceptions to that there are some who haven't had good parents some who have grown up in foster care or been adopted but on the general on the whole we owe our parents a great debt.

Paul says that we should put our religion into practice we should put our faith into action by caring for our parents by returning to them what they gave to us for this is pleasing to God it is God's will that you look after your parents and grandparents just as they looked after you when you were dependent that's what family is about it's about commitment loyalty it's about self-sacrificial love for one another that's what your mom and dad had for you for almost two decades of your life when you were a dependent in need and so a follower of Christ ought to do the same for their mother or father who comes to that place of being dependent and in need we also notice that this instruction presumes that the children or maybe one of the grandchildren are believers he says the children or the grandchildren should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so if a widow doesn't have believing children or grandchildren and those children they do have are not willing to help them out well that's a place where a widow is truly in need that's a place where the church needs to step in and provide for them as a family ought to whether it's finances or a place to live or meals or whatever and this responsibility to care for mom in her old age is part of a larger principle that applies to family in general

Paul goes on a few verses down in verse 8 and he makes this another strong statement he says anyone who does not provide for their relatives and especially for their own household has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever so it's relevant to more than just looking after mom in her old age yes it would apply to dad too it would include for those of us who are parents providing for the needs of our children those of our own family our own household this is the responsibility of every parent to provide for the needs of our own households our own families which means that those parents who who work outside the home to put an income in the bank to provide for their families you're doing the will of God when you go to work it's the will of God that both men and women provide for our families that we look after our relatives and the warning here couldn't be any stronger he says if you fail to do this for your mother your father who's in need or for your own household you have denied the faith and are worse than an unbeliever so following

[ 18:19 ] Jesus and faith in Jesus it must work itself out in caring for one's own family Paul says give the people these instructions so that no one may be open to blame verse 7 so how do these statements apply to you today what's your life situation that you're in right now do you have aging parents that are in need of assistance do you have children at home before we get to any talk of the church stepping in to regularly meet the basic needs of individuals we first have to own this responsibility each of us to our own families but then we can't stop there we must go on to what we already read in verse 3 to giving proper recognition to those who are truly in need and much of the rest of this passage is aimed at helping the church minister to these widows well now in our church today we only have one widow so we're going to kind of zoom out a bit and take a larger principle here but in order to do that we kind of have to still understand the contours of how this applies to widows so we see several principles emerge here first we hear

Paul call us to really consider the plight of the widow this in verse 5 he says the widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help so Paul's inviting us to really look at and consider what it's like to be a widow if she's really in need if she's all alone with nobody to help her out she's in a desperate situation and the picture he paints as a person of faith in the church is what we're talking about she's crying out to God day and night asking for help so it's not enough for us to just ask the question of who's a widow in our church we have to go beyond that what is it like for them to be in that situation now let's take a step back and consider the larger principle here who are the needy among us not just the widows but needy in other ways there's more than one kind of life situation that can leave someone in need and desperate praying like this praying to

God day and night for help what is it like for the person among us who has a disability a severe disability or who's suffering with debilitating health issues or chronic pain what's it like for the person whose spouse has badly mistreated them or abandoned them or the person who's been laid off and can't find work these are not just hypothetical questions of what to do in these situations Paul's calling us to really know and feel what it's like for people in our church that are in need so that's the first principle here as Christians we are to be deeply sympathetic to the situation of the needy among us but then Paul does something surprising here he lets us know that there's more than one kind of widow as we just heard there's the widow who's really in need but then in verse 6 there is he says but the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives down in verse 11 he goes on and says as for younger widows do not put them on such a list for when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ they want to marry thus they bring judgment on themselves because they have broken their first pledge besides they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house and not only do they become idlers but also busybodies who talk nonsense saying things they ought not to so I counsel younger widows to marry to have children to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander some have in fact already turned away to follow

Satan so Paul distinguishes between two kinds of widows there's the widow who is really in need and to be put on the list for receiving regular help from the church she must be at least 60 years old Paul says in verse 9 but then there are also some widows who are given to pleasure sensuality gossip and who with regular financial support from the church would be lazy or idle so in this situation being on regular church support is enabling their bad behavior so there's a second principle here we are to be deeply sympathetic to the situation of the needy among us but we are to be wise to the reality that some will take advantage of the church and again we must be careful to apply this not just to widows but to anyone who seems to be needy now this doesn't mean that we should always be suspicious or tight fisted with the church's money this doesn't mean that we should default to being judgmental rather we are to be wise and discerning careful and prudent as we seek to help the needy among us there's at least two things that are at stake the first one we see in verse 14

Paul counsels the younger widows to marry to have children and to manage their homes to give the enemy no opportunity for slander so if we as a church end up by our charity enabling people to live disreputable lives we're giving the devil an opening to slander us and it hurts the good reputation of the church so the reputation of the church is at stake and then in verse 16 Paul says if any woman who is a believer has widows in her care she should continue to help them and not let the church be burdened with them so that the church can help those widows who are really in need that word burdened reflects what it's like to care for somebody who is dependent and in need and it's not being used negatively to suggest that those people are just a burden rather it means that looking after somebody who is dependent is a heavy or a weighty responsibility and so if it's possible for an individual who has been caring for several needy people to continue on with that that's great says

[ 25 : 49 ] Paul keep on with that ministry to them that will in turn alleviate the weight on the church so that the church can use the resources that they have to help those who have no one those who are really in need so there's two things at stake first there's the reputation of the church which really does reflect on Christ I mean people are looking at us they're getting their ideas about Jesus from us and what we do and second there's the resources of the church which are at stake they may they are limited they may be needed by some so we don't want to find ourselves in a place where we're giving them to people who don't need them but then the people who do need them are lacking or going without so we must be wise and we must be careful as we put things in place for the needy among us but again this is not an excuse to do nothing for those who are really in need among us if we're so concerned that we might enable the bad behavior of some that we close our eyes and we close our hearts to the desperate need of others we fail some members in the family and so

Paul gives a bit of a framework in verses 9 and 10 I'll just read it he says no widow may be put on the list of widows unless she's over 60 has been faithful to her husband and is well known for her good deeds such as bringing up children showing hospitality washing the feet of the Lord's people helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds and it's maybe implied in the next two verses 11 and 12 that here at this time they had the widows take a pledge of some sort to remain unmarried we don't know all the details about that that's kind of lost in history to us today there's nothing wrong with a widow remarrying but in the doing so they were breaking this pledge that they had made and so to avoid having widows break that pledge and to avoid having them get into that place where they were becoming idle busy bodies and gossips

Paul counsels them to remarry and to have children and to manage their homes now we don't have a list of widows that we financially support as a church and so we really got to zoom back out here to see the larger principle as we apply it to our church today first let's talk about church giving in general our regular church giving I mean the giving that our church does to others the financial support that we have for families missionaries ministries that kind of thing should be to people who are of proven character people who have proved faithful and trustworthy people who are well known for their good deeds who are truly serving the Lord's people or meeting the needs of those who are in trouble because who we regularly support financially as a church says something about who we are as a church it says something about who

Jesus is to the outsiders looking in so it's good for us to periodically review the missionaries the ministries that we are giving to regularly second let's talk about regularly supporting the neediest members of our church family currently we don't have a list of any kind with anyone on it for this we don't have any written requirements for what how you would even get on such a list if we had one so we're not in danger as a church of enabling bad behavior like we see here or of giving to people who shouldn't be receiving it but is it possible that we're in danger of completely overlooking people among us who are in need who could right now be benefiting and right now are crying out to God for help sometimes we assume that people will simply ask when they need help or we assume that because a person has family in the church that they're looked after but is it possible that there are some people in our church whose lives right now look like this they're feeling desperate they're crying out to

God day and night asking for help feeling alone there's a real social stigma involved with asking for help especially financial help people sometimes feel ashamed or deeply embarrassed to make their need known and as we can all see the prices of everything are going up food clothing housing it's all increasing very quickly is every member of our church family provided for is every member of our church family provided for and if anyone should need help what's our plan to look after that brother or sister in Christ who is truly in need I think probably seems that we should have something in place some guidelines or policies to ensure that we are able to meet the need in a timely manner and also safeguard the resources of the church and be faithful with them these guidelines in verse 9 work for widows but what about other forms of real need within the family

[ 31 : 48 ] I'm reminded of the words that Luke wrote as he described the early church in Jerusalem Acts chapter 2 verse 42 he describes the church he says they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship to the breaking of bread and to prayer everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles all the believers were together and had everything in common they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need and then a little later on in the book of Acts chapter 4 a similar kind of description all the believers were one in heart and mind no one claimed that any of their possessions was their had with great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them for from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles feet and it was distributed to anyone who had need now we're not going to get into a philosophical discussion here about capitalism and socialism and property ownership this was a unique time in the church and not long after this the

Jerusalem church was scattered and what remained of it went underground so these words describe how it went then not necessarily how it should be for all churches and all places for all time but there's still something here for our hearts why were some selling properties and possessions because they saw other believers brothers and sisters who were in real need this is an amazing statement God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them God's generosity his abundant giving nature was so powerfully at work in them that it was leading them to be generous and to give abundantly towards the needs that they were seeing in the church and

I wonder is this statement true of our church today is God's grace so powerfully at work in us all of us that there are no needy persons among us or are there truly needy persons among us that we have been failing to help so let's do some prayer and let's talk to one another let's check in with each other and see how everyone's doing family finances I know are somewhat private matters but for those of us who belong to Christ we are family so we can have those kinds of conversations and talk with each other about these things let's pray now and ask the Lord to be at work in us Father in heaven we thank you for this reminder from your word about how we should be as a family in the church and I pray that these words would really stir our hearts and turn us toward one another in love and concern and

I pray that this would be true I pray that your grace would work so powerfully in us that there would be no needy person among us that everybody in the family would be taken care of make us that kind of a church Lord so that we will bring glory to your name we ask in Jesus name Amen